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Educational Psychology: Briefer Course. By EDWARD L. THORNDIKE.
New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1915.
Pp. 442. \$2.00.

The notable characteristics of Professor Thorndike's volume are its originality of treatment, directness of presentation, thorough lucidity, consistent interpretation—all qualities of first importance in the guiding function of a textbook. The student will know precisely what sections of the mental domain have been surveyed, what conclusions are available, what methods legitimate. It is the business of the instructor to supply the general scheme of the mind's dominion, and to relate the problems treated to the totality of considerations that the life of the mind in its practical aspects richly presents.

The volume is composed of three parts, each part the condensation of an independent volume in the larger work of which this is the "briefer course." The first considers the original nature of man, and gives altogether the best statement available of the inherent impulses which constitute the human endowment. The genetic view dominates, and tendencies are related to bits of behavior for the sake of which they exist. Jointly they build up an orderly mental control, that begins with the first reactions to experience and differs only in complexity and intricacy of pattern in the higher reaches of the triumphs of problem-solving in science and practice. It is inevitable that the ordinary "popular" view of psychological function is directed to concrete mechanisms that have proved to be a part of the fitness for the work of the world as artificially organized. The corrective of a psychological analysis reduces these aptitudes to the underlying adjustments of function to situation, according to the "behaviorist" program. Education does not create powers but only directs them, and is most distinctive in the selection of material which it chooses to emphasize as valuable. The small human stock in trade—the original nature of man—represents a rudimentary equipment (mainly of an emotional order) fitted to the earliest stages of "humanity," and adjusting it helpfully in terms of "satisfiers" and "annoyers." The potent transformation of impulses through the social enlargement contributes the vital touch; and through its expansion and by-products man matures. Theories of interpretation of the evolutionary course of mind are discussed; the "utility" theory is supported and the "recapitulation" theory refuted.

That this body of considerations is the proper starting-point for an educational psychology is unmistakable; its warrant consists in the illumination which it affords. It gives a sense of realism to the workings of the mind which is an excellent antidote to the "mythical" and abstract conceptions so tempting to the descriptive psychologist and the system-maker. Yet the result is often bare and seemingly wooden; it is simple and strenuous and direct, while the life of the mind seems complex and gentle and evasive. None the less the skeleton is the structural basis, however much our interest is confined to the flesh-and-blood investiture, to say nothing of the artificial appearance. The

impression of the book remains that definiteness of result has been sacrificed to significance of perspective. Samples as samples are not likely to mislead; but with the attention upon samples and not upon the "total" product thus sampled, the student may carry away a false notion of the psychological setting. That a competent and discerning teacher can relieve this danger goes without saying.

The central portion of the book is concerned with the problem of learning. The analogies between animal learning and human learning are admirably drawn. Tables and curves are in such investigations truly samples, though their significance varies with the quality of the acquisition. Problems of practice and fatigue and the interrelation of the supporting parts of a composite activity are generic, and in any wise selection typical. Since so much of the business of education is centered in the learning process, its central place in psychological analysis is doubly warranted. A future edition will doubtless extend the varieties of learning to the orders of acquisition to which the psychologist is now giving suggestive study.

The concluding section deals with the individual differences of men. The central problems are the references of such differences to heredity and to environment: to sex, and race, and immediate ancestry and again to the emphases, the encouragements and discouragements of the environment. This is in many respects the most interesting phase of practical psychology and one that forms the actual pivot of national and international contrasts. The data of sex and ancestry are in certain directions available; and the conclusions readily drawn; those of race are far more uncertain. Professor Thorndike has made a temperate and discerning statement of the significance of the facts in the case. He has wisely abandoned the more literal manner of the earlier divisions and given himself scope to indicate suggestively what cannot be determined experimentally. The temper of his conclusions is indicated in such statements as the following:

We may even expect that education will be doubly effective, once society recognizes the advantages given to some and denied to others by heredity. That men have different amounts of capacity does not imply any the less advantage from or need of wise investment. If it be true, for example, that the negro is by nature unintellectual and joyous, this does not imply that he may not be made more intelligent by wiser training or misanthropic and ugly-tempered by the treatment he now receives. It does mean that we should be stupid to expect the same results from him that we should from an exceptionally intellectual race like the Jews, and that he will stand with equanimity a degree of disdain which a Celt would requite with dynamite and arson.

The volume is sustained, not alone by unity of purpose and command of material, but equally by an exceptionable gift for clear statement and apt illustration. It is never dull, though inevitable, realistic. Its place in the available resources for the teaching of psychology is well at the top, though its limitations of plan assign it to a definite aim and clientèle.

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